

Holmes and Merrick miss gift goals at Oxford

Oxford City 3, Wycombe Wanderers 1.

FIVE CRUCIAL minutes just before the break cost Wycombe Wanderers both Isthmian League points against their old enemy Oxford City on Saturday.

Three wonderful opportunities were missed inside 300 seconds which, if converted, would have allowed the Wanderers to resume the battle in an almost unassailable position with a 4-1 lead.

As it was, they were to pay a heavy price for these embarrassing misses which was really an elementary matter of putting the ball in the back of the net.

Admittedly Wycombe were without their chief striker, Tony Horseman, who easily would have poached these openings even though he is slightly off key.

DRAB AFFAIR

When these two sides meet, one can usually count on a tense and keen struggle, but the latest chapter was, at times, a rather drab affair. The City, obviously, had their mind fixed firmly on their next Amateur Cup clash, doing their utmost to keep out of trouble. However, after being let off the hook, Oxford took firm control in the second period to completely outgun Wanderers.

Wycombe streaked into the lead in the 22nd minute. Worley flashed over a corner and Holmes rose to head home via the underside of the bar.

Oxford springboarded into attack and just two minutes later equalised. A tame shot by Caffel was only partly cleared and Goodinson stabbed the ball in.

The City looked far from confident and their football fell well below the quality one has come to expect from a team which has reached the fourth round of the Amateur Cup.

Wanderers' tragic hat-trick of misses came in this dismal sequence. Firstly, Samuels, operating in his mid-field role at left-half, lobbed a shrewd pass over the City's offside trap. Merrick, moving through, went cleverly to the right of 'keeper Shippey and then completely missed his shot!

But the chief culprit was Holmes. Faulkner again defeated the offside trap and Holmes streaked on only to lose control of the ball with Shippey all alone in

the six-yard box. Holmes completed this trio of almost unbelievable mistakes, when he shot straight at Shippey and then lobbed the rebound over an unguarded goal.

SURRENDERED

Clearly, these errors had a drastic effect on Wycombe. They could not rediscover any of their first half rhythm and completely surrendered the initiative in the second half.

Oxford took the lead in the 55th minute, with a scrappy goal. Goodinson netted again after the Wycombe rearguard should have cleared Hellyer's off-target shot to safety.

The football was far too close, although an uneven pitch made intricate ball control almost impossible. The only clear-cut goal came in the 66th minute when the impish Hellyer flicked home Morton's cross, past the unsighted Maskell.

Wycombe Wanderers: J. Maskell, C. Gale, P. Eyres, V. Faulkner, I. Rundle, K. Samuels, L. Worley, B. Baker, V. Busby, L. Merrick, S. Holmes.

Oxford City 3 Wycombe 1

TWO GOALS by Oxford City right-half Ron Goodinson sent near neighbours Wycombe sliding to another Isthmian League defeat.

Although they scored first in the 22nd minute through Steve Holmes, Wycombe were never able to match Oxford's free running forward play in the second half.

Goodinson was presented with a gift equaliser two minutes after Wycombe's goal, from then on Oxford—whose defence was overconfident at times—went from strength to strength, and second half goals by Goodinson (55min) and Hellyer (67min) completed the formality of victory.